



# Strengthening gender equality & livelihoods in eastern DRC – Findings for future programmes

Despite its vast natural resources, the **Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)** has one of the largest food crises in the world, with an estimated 25.4 million experiencing crisis and emergency levels of food insecurity.

The protracted conflict in the country, particularly in the eastern provinces, has triggered large-scale population displacements, disrupting agricultural activities and hampering access to markets, schools and healthcare services.

At the same time, girls and women are one of the most adversely affected groups by the ongoing conflicts that have exacerbated an already existing gender imbalance. Gender-based violence (GBV) is particularly alarming: 1 in 2 women report having experienced physical violence at least once in their lifetime.

In this evolving context, it is critical to leverage data to inform policy dialogue and the design of future programs that seek to address humanitarian, development, and peacebuilding challenges. The World Food Program's Office of Evaluation (OEV) and the World Bank's Development Impact (DIME) partnered to understand constraints to gender equality and social cohesion in eastern DRC and to draw lessons for policies and programmes.

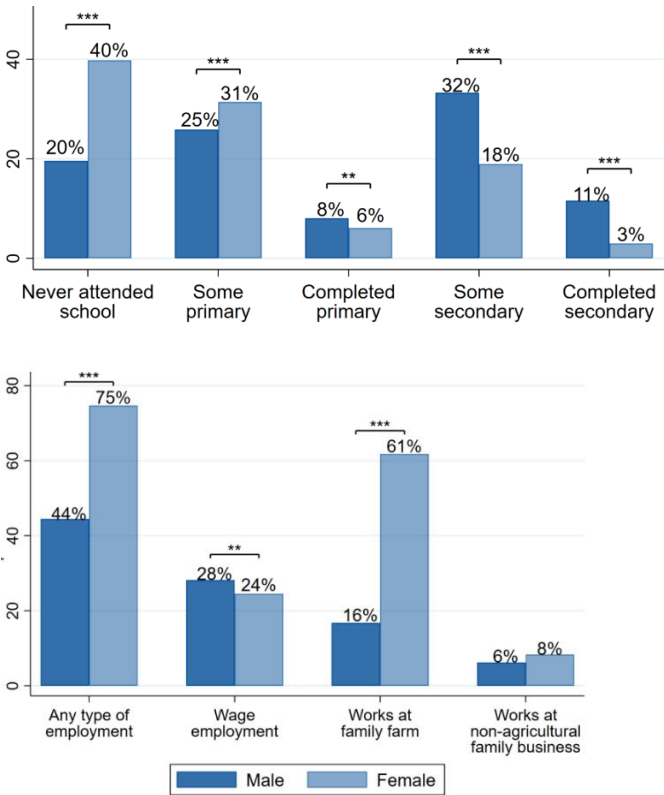
A new report, under the WFP-DIME partnership, provides a comprehensive diagnostic of gender gaps in socio-economic opportunities, status of social cohesion and food security in South Kivu.

**Our diagnostic report reveals some of the following key findings:**

## 1 Women and girls in South Kivu face significant barriers to socio-economic opportunities and empowerment.

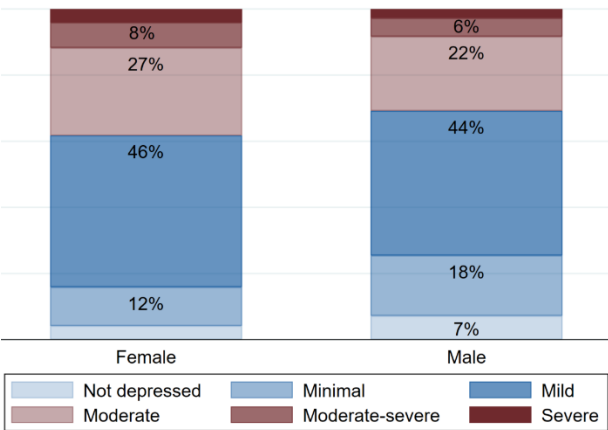
While educational attainment is low for both genders, women are 50% less likely than men to have ever attended school and 72% less likely to have completed secondary education. In terms of the labour market, women are 40% more likely to participate in the labour market compared to men, but this difference is mostly driven by self-employment in a household-owned farm.

Only 1 in 4 women and 1 in 3 men work in wage employment. Despite women’s higher labour participation, women usually earn 60% less than men for similar jobs.



Even though women in South Kivu tend to make decisions about household consumption jointly with their partner, they still tend to have less intra-household bargaining power compared to men – both men and women believe that men in their community are the ones who usually make decisions about household consumption (including decisions about women’s healthcare).

In terms of mental health outcomes, there are high levels of reported depression across both genders – 75% with at least mild depression – but women are



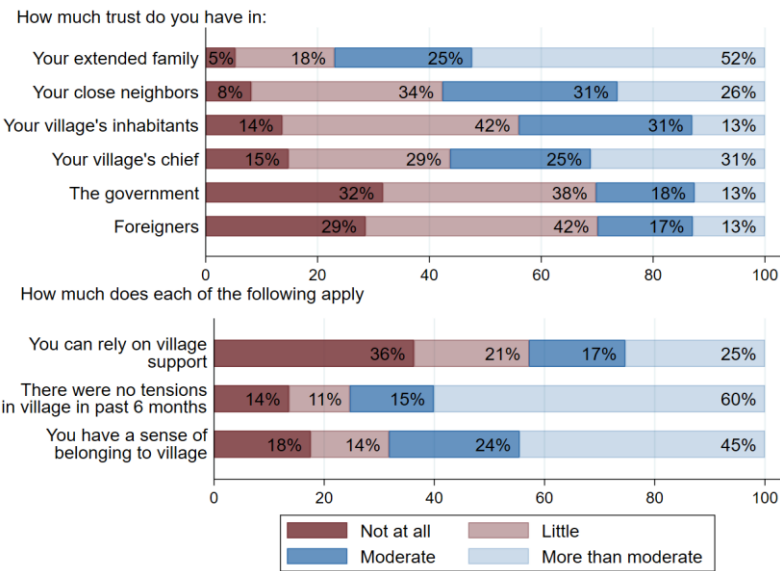
22% more likely than men to report symptoms of moderate to severe depression. In addition, women are significantly more likely to be dissatisfied with life compared to men.

## 2 Despite strong trust and social support from extended family and close friends, social cohesion in the community remains very weak.

While women in South Kivu report high levels of trust in their extended family, village chief and close neighbours, most of them report moderate to little trust in village inhabitants and little to no trust in the government and foreigners.

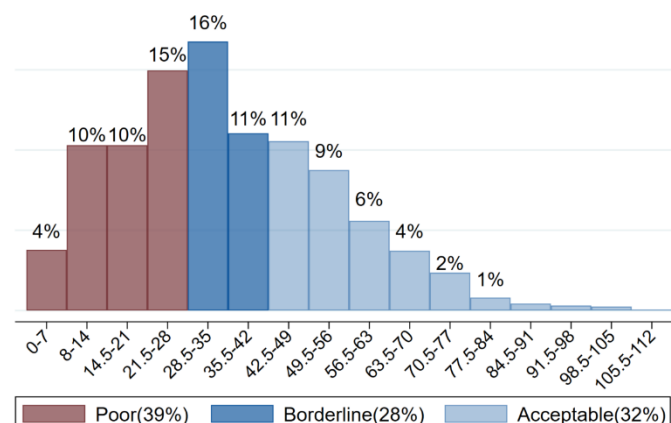
In terms of social connectedness within the community, 2 in 3 women report little or no reliance on other village inhabitants during difficult times. This lack of trust and reliance on other community members is further reflected in a low sense of belonging to the community, with over half of women (55%) feeling only moderately close or not close at all to their community.

In terms of social connectedness between communities (social networks), both women and men in South Kivu tend to interact mostly with members of their own community, suggesting very clustered social networks where inter-tribal relationships take place very rarely.



### 3 Households in South Kivu face increased vulnerability and low levels of socio-economic resilience

Most households in South Kivu are severely food insecure and have borderline or poor food consumption levels as measured by the Food Consumption Score (FCS). Women are particularly affected with only 31% meeting the recommended minimum dietary diversity i.e. consuming at least five of ten different reference food groups to ensure a balanced diet. See graph on right.



## THE ROAD AHEAD



Based on these diagnostics, as well evidence from DRC and across the world, the following approaches contribute to promoting gender equality and social cohesion:

### Gender equality and women's empowerment:

Female illiteracy and lack of skills are one of the main causes of poverty and increased vulnerability as they set women towards a more disadvantaged path characterized by less access to assets, lower earnings, as well as lower voice and agency. In order to promote gender equality and women's empowerment, future programming could focus on: (i) enhancing women's skills through training in literacy and numeracy, entrepreneurship, and small business management (ii) increasing access to capital and income-generating activities through savings and loan schemes and technical support to accumulate assets and diversify income sources, and (iii) increasing women's voice and agency through life skills training and behavioural change campaigns to challenge traditional practices.



**Social cohesion:** For decades, eastern DRC has been plagued by armed conflict, land disputes and ethnic tensions, leading to large numbers of both internally displaced persons (IDPs)

and refugees. The high level of violence has severely affected social cohesion in eastern DRC, as well as people's trust in the government. In order to stabilize the region and build social cohesion, future programming could focus on improved social cohesion via: (i) promoting intergroup social cohesion through school-based peace education interventions (e.g., working with school children on sensitization for peace), (ii) intergroup dialogue interventions where participants are guided in conversations to find common ground and work through points of tension, and (iii) edutainment for peace interventions, which focuses on triggering social and behavioural changes through the use of media to promote counter-narratives to violence.